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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 03 SARAJEVO 000870

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SUBJECT: BOSNIA - DISCUSSIONS WITH SDA LEADERSHIP ON
SREBRENICA

REF: A. SARAJEVO 815
[B. 07 SARAJEVO 1127](#)
[C. SARAJEVO 816](#)
[D. SARAJEVO 793](#)

Classified By: CDA Judith B. Cefkin, Reasons 1.4 (b), (d)

[1](#)1. (C) SUMMARY: On May 15, we met two senior officials from the Bosniak Party for Democratic Action (SDA) -- Federation Vice President Mirsad Kebo and state-level parliamentarian Bakir Izetbegovic -- to discuss the party's plans to the October municipal elections, particularly the steps SDA was taking to ensure Bosniaks nominated a single candidate for the Srebrenica mayoralty. We stressed to both men that Bosniaks had a responsibility to select a candidate who would help heal Srebrenica's wounds, adding forcefully that if Bosniaks nominated a separatist, they could not count on U.S. support on Srebrenica in the future. Kebo agreed, noting his concerns over support within SDA for Camil Durakovic, who played a leading role in the 2007 Srebrenica separatist movement. Izetbegovic was coy. We also traveled to Srebrenica on May 15 and discussed the upcoming elections with local leaders. There was little support among Srebrenica Bosniaks for Durakovic; most preferred that the incumbent, Abdurahman Malkic, seek reelection. Kebo, a close confidant of SDA President Tihic, gave a detailed description of the Tihic's difficult recovery from surgery for colon cancer, and shared concerns that Federation Police Director Zlatko Miletic may have politically compromised himself in his efforts to try and keep his job. Finally, Izetbegovic told us that he planned a five trip to Iran, beginning on May 16, and discussed his views about how best to deal with the former Mujaheddin still living in Bosna. END SUMMARY

Embassy Outlines Srebrenica Expectations to SDA Leadership

[1](#)2. (C) We met with Federation Vice President Mirsad Kebo and state-level parliamentarian Bakir Izetbegovic on May 15 to discuss Srebrenica. Both men are members of the Party for Democratic Action's (SDA) Presidency. We emphasized the U.S. commitment to Srebrenica and thanked them for their party's constructive approach to negotiations over the amendment to BiH Election Law that will allow 1991 residents of Srebrenica to vote there in October's municipal elections (Refs C and D). We also shared with them our plans to support an OSCE-led effort to assist the Central Election Commission (CEC) with implementation of the amendment and for a broader CEC registration/get-out-the-vote campaign among displaced persons and the Diaspora. However, we stressed that the Bosniak political parties now needed to do their part and

agree on a joint mayoral candidate for Srebrenica so the Bosniak vote would not be split. We also underscored that Bosniaks must select a candidate who will unite the community, not divide it. We delivered a strong message that if the Bosniak parties choose a supporter of the Srebrenica separatist movement as their candidate, they could not count on future U.S. support on Srebrenica-related issues.

SDA Prepared to Work with SBiH

13. (C) Izetbegovic informed us that SDA President Sulejman Tihic had signed a document instructing all municipal SDA organizations in Republika Srpska to cooperate with the Party for BiH (SBiH) municipal organization and to agree on joint candidates, including in Srebrenica. (Note: Izetbegovic implied that he had pressed a reluctant Tihic to agree to an RS-based coalition with SBiH. End Note) Izetbegovic told us that he had already raised the issue with SBiH President Haris Silajdzic, who had raised no objections. Izetbegovic added that he did not know whether Silajdzic had instructed his party to work with SDA in the RS, but predicted there would not be problems from SBiH over the choice of a joint mayoral candidate for Srebrenica. Izetbegovic was more concerned about reluctance within SDA to partner with SBiH. Izetbegovic said that current Srebrenica Mayor, Abdurahman Malkic, was not a suitable candidate. He preferred "a new face, a man or a woman, who lives in Srebrenica and speaks English." (Note: We believe he may have been referring to Camil Durakovic, who is a Bosniak-American and lives in Srebrenica. End Note)

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14. (C) Kebo thanked us for our help in obtaining "a morally just solution for Srebrenica." Kebo told us that Camil Durakovic, who was an active participant in the Srebrenica secession movement last year, was the preferred candidate within some SDA circles, but quickly added that he believed Durakovic was "too much of an extremist to be a viable candidate." Although his SDA colleagues from Srebrenica favored Durakovic's candidacy, Kebo promised to use his position on SDA's personnel committee to lobby for a more balanced candidate. Kebo told us he would meet on May 15 with the SDA election team and would push for a more moderate candidate. He also indicated that he may travel soon to Srebrenica to push for such an outcome. He also said he would inform Tihic, who is in Ljubljana for a surgical procedure, of the U.S. position. Kebo shared his concern that Silajdzic was trying to take over the candidate selection process for Srebrenica and mused that any of Silajdzic's candidates would be "dividers, not uniters." Finally, he also criticized current Minister for Human Rights and Refugees Safet Halilovic (SBiH) for having neglected his responsibilities toward Bosniaks in Srebrenica.

Local Bosniaks Prefer Malkic Over Durakovic

15. (C) We traveled to Srebrenica on May 15 to participate in a session of the Organizing Board for the July 11 Srebrenica commemoration. (Note: The USG has been a member of this body since the establishment of the Potocari Memorial. End Note) During the visit we spoke with Srebrenica community leaders, including political party representatives, about the upcoming elections. They confirmed that Camil Durakovic was interested in running for mayor, possibly as an unaffiliated candidate, but there was not a great deal of support for his candidacy. They noted that he lacks political experience, and burned too many bridges last year by leading the separatist movement and organizing the Sarajevo tent settlement. Local Bosniaks prefer that Mayor Malkic seek reelection, and one Srebrenica SDA official characterized Malkic as "the only Bosniak candidate capable of leading Srebrenica." They warned that now was "not the time for new experiments in municipal administration." (Note: Tihic

appeared to torpedo Malkic's prospects by publicly stating that the Bosniak mayoral candidate must live in Srebrenica. Malkic's family lives in the outskirts of Sarajevo, but Malkic spends most of his week in his Srebrenica apartment and commutes home on weekends. End Note)

Tihic's Health Problems

¶6. (C) Kebo also told us that Tihic was currently in Ljubljana awaiting surgery to reconnect portions of his intestines so doctors could remove his colostomy bag. Kebo met with Tihic on May 7, and said Tihic had looked so bad, that Kebo ordered his friend to take a long recovery somewhere outside of Sarajevo. Kebo acknowledged that Tihic has had a difficult post-operative recovery. He also reported that Tihic had recently suffered from thrombosis in his right leg, which needed further surgical intervention. Tihic told Kebo that his pre-surgery radiation treatment had removed 75 percent of his cancer cells. Kebo claimed that the surgery removed the remaining 25 percent, but also required removal of a portion of his liver, several glands, and a portion of his intestines. Kebo expected Tihic to return to Sarajevo in about nine days for further recovery and stated that the long-term prognosis was good despite the current difficulties Tihic is having. Kebo was at pains to stress that Tihic, despite his health problems, was still in firm control of SDA. Although Izetbegovic may want Tihic's job, Kebo claimed Izetbegovic enjoyed only 20 percent support within the party. Kebo recounted Izetbegovic's illicit forms of income and stressed his ties with criminal elements. Kebo also lamented the political protection Izetbegovic receives from the head of the Islamic Community (IC) Reisu-l-Ulema Mustafa effendi Ceric, whom Kebo accused of trying to change IC rules to remain "Reis for life."

Kebo Abandons Federation Police Chief Miletic

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¶7. (C) Kebo raised the issue of the ongoing controversy over the legality of the 2006 appointment of Federation Police Director Zlatko Miletic (Refs A and B). The Federation House of Peoples (HoP) recently asked the Federation Government for its opinion on the legality of Miletic's appointment. The HoP is scheduled to vote on a resolution that would remove Miletic from his position and call immediately for a new selection process. In the past Kebo had provided support to Miletic and defended him against politically-motivated attacks, even from within his own party. However, Kebo told us that Miletic, in order to save his job, had now become too close with corrupt elements within the SDA, including Federation PM Nedžad Brankovic and Bakir Izetbegovic. Kebo said that he believed Miletic may have promised to not investigate them for corruption in return for helping him keep his position. As a result, Tihic had instructed that SDA would support the resolution calling for nullification of Miletic's appointment, Kebo said. Kebo also said that SBiH and HDZ would support the resolution so that, in essence, it would be very difficult to save Miletic's position. We stressed the importance we attach to the presence of a strong, capable, honest police official in the position of Federation Police Director, whether it be Miletic or a new candidate. We also raised concerns about rumblings we have heard that some may attempt to use Miletic's potential dismissal to challenge the legality of law enforcement actions taken under Miletic's watch. Kebo undertook to look into this question and suggested that he could delay the vote on the resolution pending greater clarity on these issues.

Izetbegovic, Iran and Foreign Fighters

¶8. (C) At the conclusion of our conversation about Srebrenica, Izetbegovic raised his plans to travel to Iran

(Note: Izetbegovic left for Tehran on May 16 and will spend three days there and two in Tabriz, and possibly Isfahan before returning to Sarajevo. End Note). He said that he would be hosted by former Iranian government officials with whom he had worked during the 1992-1992 war. Izetbegovic told us that he wanted to inform us about the trip in advance because he "did not have any secrets," "did not want to raise any suspicions about the nature of the trip," and "did not want the U.S. government to find out from the Bosnian newspapers." Izetbegovic explained that his "enemies" would seek to portray the trip as "nefarious" and would label him "an Iranian agent."

19. (C) Izetbegovic also raised the issue of former Mujaheddin who still lived in Bosnia. He explained that those who have decided to stay in Bosnia are not a threat, implying that the extremists had left Bosnia years ago while his father was still President, after his father had made clear that he would not allow the Mujaheddin to engage in radical activities. Izetbegovic argued that the foreign fighters who remained in Bosnia was "in the process of assimilating," adding that many of their children had refused to embrace more fundamentalist religious beliefs of their fathers. Izetbegovic noted that it was politically difficult for Bosniaks to deport individuals who had helped them defend themselves during the war, especially when much of the rest of the world had turned its back on Bosnia. He told us that those who act violently should be punished, noting that they were not true to their faith, but predicted that measures against those who were living peacefully in Bosnia would be counterproductive.

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